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“This is (still) a man’s world”: Gender Inequality in Hollywood from the Silent Era to #MeToo

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KIANA ROSS (Mathematics)

“This is (still) a man’s world”: Gender Inequality in Hollywood from the Silent Era to #MeToo

Sponsor: Kathleen McIntyre (Gender and Women's Studies, Honors Program)

Film is an art form, a powerful medium used to inspire, educate, and entertain. The history of the film industry is a long event packed road that demonstrates key societal and technological advancements. In a matter of 100 years, the industry went from producing minute-long silent pictures to major Hollywood feature-length films. While there has been significant growth throughout the history of film, one thing remains stagnant: the clear gender inequality. Women have been involved in the film industry since the early 1920s as directors and actresses, but they rarely receive recognition. Despite major roles and efforts, women in the industry are left in the dust, while the men flourish.

This project investigates how the current U.S. film industry perpetuates gender inequality through many interrelated factors, noting the key differences. This inequality has been consistent across all occupations in the industry since its emergence in the late 1800s. Further research regarding male vs. female portrayal, underrepresentation, and wages in the profession demonstrate how this disparity reinforces gender stereotypes and bias.

I conducted an in-depth analysis of women in film from the early 1900s to 2021, focusing on factors such as the pay gap, production role gap, and the lack of recognition toward feminist films. One similarity between all these issues is they result from resistance to change. This project will examine these issues and present a potential explanation regarding why this inequality exists, despite years of activism, speaking up, and fighting for change. There is a long road ahead, but with continued support and campaigning, one day women will be treated as equal not only in this industry but all industries.